

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of: *
*
Major Marine Accident - *
Collision of the Japanese *
Fisheries Training Vessel *
EHIME MARU and the U.S. Navy *
Nuclear Attack Submarine USS *
GREENVILLE *

Friday,
February 16, 2001

INTERVIEW OF:

MICHAEL MITCHELL

PRESENT: DONALD J. TYRRELL, Chief, Major
Investigation Division, Office of Marine Safety,
National Transportation Safety Board

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. TYRRELL: I am talking to Mr. Michael
3 Mitchell.

4 And it is the 16th of February. The time
5 is 12:23 Eastern standard time.

6 Okay. Mr. Mitchell, could you first tell
7 me a little bit about the organization that you
8 belong to and what the purpose of the trip, just for
9 background information.

10 MR. MITCHELL: Essentially, myself and my
11 finance were invited on the trip by John Hall, who
12 according to the press releases is affiliated with
13 the USS Missouri.

14 MR. TYRRELL: That is some sort of
15 historical organization.

16 MR. MITCHELL: You would have to ask John.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

18 MR. MITCHELL: But, my involvement is
19 strictly, I am a friend of Mr. Hall. I have had
20 some business dealings with him and we were invited
21 on the trip.

22 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Okay.

23 Can you tell me about what time did you
24 arrive at, where did you go to assemble, I guess

1 that would be a good place to start?

2 MR. MITCHELL: The, we had a group of, I
3 guess 12 plus two. You know, there were two that
4 actually live in Hawaii. And 12 of us were staying
5 at the Royal Hawaiian. And essentially took a van
6 to the Navy Base. And we had a Navy representative
7 meet us and take us to the submarine.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And that was at the
9 subbase in Pearl Harbor.

10 MR. MITCHELL: That is correct.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. When you arrived at
12 Pearl Harbor, did they give you any kind of briefing
13 before you went aboard the submarine?

14 MR. MITCHELL: No, we assembled right in
15 front of the submarine and were introduced to
16 several members of the crew and Captain.

17 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Okay. And about what
18 time do you think it was that you went onboard?

19 MR. MITCHELL: I don't recall the exact
20 time. I know it was, that we arrived at the base
21 about 6:30 and I know it took probably at least an
22 hour to get to the submarine. It was somewhere
23 around 7:30, eight o'clock.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And when you got

1 onboard, what was the first thing that you did?

2 MR. MITCHELL: They assembled all of us in
3 the crew mess, and at that time they did give a
4 briefing of sorts of the submarine.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And was that in the
6 nature of a, of a safety briefing or was it a
7 nature, in the nature of information about
8 submarine, background information?

9 MR. MITCHELL: I believe it was a little bit
10 of both.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

12 MR. MITCHELL: I don't have clear
13 recollection of exactly what was said in that brief,
14 but I do recall that we assembled in the mess and
15 they had, you know, flat screen television in there
16 and showed, you know, some pictures and did talk to
17 us about the submarine. And they did cover some
18 safety issues in that brief.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you recall what any
20 of the safety issues -- would have been?

21 MR. MITCHELL: I know it was quoted that we
22 were to follow exact instructions of the officers on
23 the ship and that our access would be restricted.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Do you recall that yourself?--

1 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

3 MR. MITCHELL: For instance, they indicated
4 that we would not be, have any, any access behind
5 the crew mess to get to the reactor area and the
6 back part of the submarine.

7 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Did they mention
8 anything at all about what types of maneuvers the
9 submarine would be undergoing?

10 MR. MITCHELL: No. At that time they
11 indicated that, you know, we were, had the
12 opportunity to be observers in their normal training
13 exercises.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

15 MR. MITCHELL: And at that time we really
16 didn't know, they didn't get into you will be doing
17 this, and this and this. They didn't really outline
18 the entire schedule.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Did they, did you have some
20 indication beforehand of how long you would be away?

21 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

22 MR. TYRRELL: What did they say?

23 MR. MITCHELL: It was more than what they
24 said, I mean, there was actually a schedule.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

2 MR. MITCHELL: You could get access to that
3 probably from the Navy, but there is a printed
4 schedule of time.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

6 MR. MITCHELL: We weren't given a copy of
7 that. They said that was classified.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Now, when you, when
9 you, before the vessel got underway, got away from
10 the pier, did they, did you go through any kind of a
11 tour of the vessel?

12 MR. MITCHELL: Not really, because of the
13 size restrictions on the sub, they had, left some of
14 us down in the crew mess and then some were given
15 the opportunity to go up on top of the submarine as
16 it was leaving Pearl.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Up on the conning
18 tower.

19 MR. MITCHELL: That is correct. And we put
20 on life vests, I remember and, and we each kind of
21 had turns going up on, I guess the bow of the ship,
22 whatever you want to call it. And, and about two,
23 two to four at a time were given an opportunity to
24 go on top of the conning tower with the Captain.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. This is while they
2 were, while the submarine was --

3 MR. MITCHELL: Departing Pearl on the
4 surface.

5 MR. TYRRELL: -- on the surface. Okay.
6 Do you think, did you personally get an opportunity
7 to go onto both the conning tower and onto the main
8 deck?

9 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, I did.

10 MR. TYRRELL: And do you think that everyone
11 in the group cycled through those positions?

12 MR. MITCHELL: I don't recall if everyone in
13 the group cycled through those positions. I would
14 say the majority did.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. I have heard on the
16 media that there was 16 people in the group.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Again, my recollection, our
18 group was 12. There were two Hawaiians, that was
19 14. There was, you know, you tell me, you know who
20 the author is, do you not?

21 MR. TYRRELL: Who the what?

22 MR. MITCHELL: The author.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, yes.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Sports writer.

1 MR. TYRRELL: What is his name? Oh, he was
2 on television yesterday. What is the other --

3 MR. MITCHELL: No, John Hall was the --

4 MR. TYRRELL: Oh --

5 (Pause.)

6 MR. TYRRELL: I can't remember his name.
7 Here are all of the names that the Navy gave us.

8 MR. MITCHELL: That would be helpful.

9 (Pause.)

10 MR. TYRRELL: Let's see there was Schnur,
11 Brehmer(ph), Wyatt, Hall, Snell, Feldman, Mitchell,
12 Cullen, Thoman, Nolan, Clary.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Clary, Clary is the one who
14 was, he got all of the -- And then in addition to
15 the, I guess 14 of us and Clary would make 16.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

17 MR. MITCHELL: There was also the Chief of
18 Staff, I think of the Admiral's, is it Branhuber,
19 Brandhuber (ph), Bob.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. I don't have his
21 name, but that would be easy to find. Okay.

22 So --

23 MR. MITCHELL: And I would also tell you as,
24 as we were departing Pearl and they had some other,

1 some of us in the conning tower, I think some of the
2 individuals at that time had an opportunity to go to
3 the command center as well.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

5 MR. MITCHELL: They kind of split us up a
6 little bit.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How long do you think
8 you were on, after you departed that the base
9 submerged?

10 MR. MITCHELL: I think it took quite awhile
11 to submerge, because I remember being on top, seeing
12 the Missouri off to one side. You know, we were at
13 sea before we submerged.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Obviously.

16 MR. TYRRELL: All right. When the vessel
17 submerged, what did you do, where did you go?

18 MR. MITCHELL: At that time they had us
19 below deck and I believe I was in the Captain's
20 stateroom at that time or about that time. And we
21 were given an opportunity to go in the control room
22 during the submerging.

23 MR. TYRRELL: And was everyone in the
24 control room at the same time?

1 MR. MITCHELL: I don't believe so. I think
2 they kind of cycled people through.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Where would you go when you
4 were cycled away from the --

5 MR. MITCHELL: Down to the mess.

6 MR. TYRRELL: To the mess, crew's mess?

7 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

9 MR. MITCHELL: And there was the ward room,
10 I mean, we took in two groups, had lunch aboard the
11 submarine.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

13 MR. MITCHELL: In two groups. That is why,
14 you know, everyone wasn't together at the same time
15 because -- As we were going out to sea, I remember
16 that we cycled through the two groups for lunch.

17 MR. TYRRELL: I see. So, up until, so after
18 you submerged and you went to the control room,
19 yourself --

20 MR. MITCHELL: We also had tours of the
21 torpedo room, because I actually went into the
22 torpedo room and was actually given an opportunity
23 to crawl into the torpedo room and write my name on
24 the torpedo door with a grease pencil.

1 MR. TYRRELL: So, the sequence of events
2 would be you submerged, you went to the Captain's
3 stateroom and then did you have lunch before you
4 went to the control room or --

5 MR. MITCHELL: I don't have perfect, perfect
6 recollection as to the exact sequence on that. I
7 believe we viewed the torpedo room before lunch.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And then --

9 MR. MITCHELL: But, I could be mistaken,
10 again, it is not crystal clear as to the exact
11 sequence.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Well, all I can ask is for the
13 best that you can do.

14 MR. MITCHELL: I don't remember.

15 MR. TYRRELL: So, you went to the torpedo
16 room and then you went to the control room.

17 MR. MITCHELL: I believe so, yes.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Did you ever go into the sonar
19 room?

20 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, we did. We did get a
21 tour of the sonar room.

22 MR. TYRRELL: And was that about the same
23 time that you were in the control room?

24 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

2 MR. MITCHELL: All of that, I believe, was
3 before lunch.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, okay.

5 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. All those sequence of
6 events that we just mentioned were before lunch.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And about what time
8 was it that you ate lunch?

9 MR. MITCHELL: Probably ate lunch around, we
10 were the second seating, I remember that. So, it
11 may have been close to one o'clock.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And after lunch, what
13 happened?

14 MR. MITCHELL: After the second seating of
15 lunch, that is when they began the maneuvers. And
16 we, we all assembled on the, in the control room.
17 Actually the Captain gave us the option to either go
18 to the control room or the crew's mess where, you
19 know, they have got lemonade and ice tea in kind of
20 see through containers. And he said, you know, it
21 is an interesting spot to be when going through
22 maneuvers because you can actually see the pitch of
23 the ship. But, I believe everyone elected to go to
24 the control room.

1 MR. TYRRELL: So, everyone went to the,
2 everyone was in the control room.

3 MR. MITCHELL: So, this was my second tour
4 of the control room. The first tour of the control
5 room, I actually got to assist as the submarine
6 submerged.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, you did.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, I got to sit in the left
9 hand seat, again, with close supervision of the crew
10 member right behind me. - I did the down bubble.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Down bubble. Does that mean -
12 -

13 MR. MITCHELL: That is actually when we
14 submerged.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Is that the plane, the stern
16 plane?

17 MR. MITCHELL: To be honest, I don't have a
18 perfect recollection of which seat did what. I know
19 the seat that I was in, it was kind of like a, an
20 airplane or a car steering wheel.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

22 MR. MITCHELL: And I would pull it back and
23 push it forward to make the angle of descent go up
24 and down.

1 MR. TYRRELL: I see.

2 MR. MITCHELL: And I believe it was the left
3 hand seat.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

5 MR. MITCHELL: When Clary was in the seat at
6 the time of the accident, he was in the right hand
7 seat. So, I am not sure which did what.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. All right, and then
9 this was during the submerging.

10 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Can you take me
12 through what they did before the actual submergence
13 as far as giving you instructions?

14 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, they actually allowed
15 some of the guests onboard to participate in it,
16 where, you know, one person could say dive, dive,
17 dive, somebody got to blow the dive horn, I believe.
18 And, you know, I got to take the submarine down.
19 Again, again, I had a crew member literally sitting
20 there right on my shoulders. I don't know if he had
21 his hands on my hands, I don't think he did. But,
22 you have got a little piece of glass that kind
23 floats, almost like mercury floating up and down in
24 it, and he would tell me to keep it right there at,

1 you know, five degree down bubble, keep it at 10
2 degree down bubble and I would maneuver the stick
3 forward and back to hit, to keep it in that zone.
4 And I think what they were doing at that point, was
5 trying to ballast the ship to kind of get it to
6 neutral. Because what they explained is every time
7 they go out, you have got different weight on the
8 ship, you know, I guess, the people you have got on
9 the ship, all of that stuff, so that they have got
10 to kind of figure out what, how to get it to neutral
11 buoyancy.--

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What exactly were you
13 tasked to do, what were your instructions as far as
14 during the submerging operation? Did they tell you
15 put it to a particular location?

16 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, they did. Yes, they
17 did. And it changed, because as the submarine went
18 down, they got different, different angles. At one
19 point it was 10 degree down bubble, five degree down
20 bubble, neutral down bubble, as the submarine
21 actually went down and leveled off.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. They were giving you
23 specific directions on where to put it.

24 MR. MITCHELL: Oh, yeah, yes.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And --

2 MR. MITCHELL: Specific instructions with
3 multiple people watching what I was doing. I mean,
4 it wasn't like they said, here is the keys to the
5 sub, have fun.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

7 MR. MITCHELL: I mean, that wasn't the
8 experience. To the extent, I don't know that even
9 when I was doing that, I really influenced anything.
10 I mean, you know, it was kind, I think it was an
11 experience, I enjoyed it. It was kind of like you
12 are getting the opportunity to ride or to drive a
13 sub, but in reality it is not like I had
14 unsupervised control of the ship. Not even close.
15 I had multiple people standing right there next to
16 me.

17 MR. TYRRELL: But, did they have their hands
18 on the controls as well?

19 MR. MITCHELL: I don't believe so.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

21 MR. MITCHELL: I think the only time that
22 they may have put their hands on mine, if I got it
23 slightly out of the zone. A crew member stepped in
24 and helped pull back, push forward to get it back to

1 where I was suppose to be, the down bubble.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, you were sitting
3 in the seat and where were they, where were they
4 standing?

5 MR. MITCHELL: Literally right on my
6 shoulders. I mean, it is pretty close quarters and
7 he was literally like, I think he actually had his
8 hands on my shoulders.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. He was behind you
10 then.

11 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

13 MR. MITCHELL: Behind me and almost like
14 leaning over my shoulder watching exactly what was
15 going on. Like I said, it was close supervision.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Were there any
17 problems with the submergence?

18 MR. MITCHELL: No.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Nothing that you can detect
20 anyway?

21 MR. MITCHELL: No. My impressions of the
22 crew, unbelievably professional, you know, in
23 everything that they were doing.

24 MR. TYRRELL: That is great.

1 All right. So, after the submarine reached
2 its submerged depth, do you remember what that was?

3 MR. MITCHELL: I remember that, I don't
4 remember what the submerged depth was at that point
5 in time.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

7 MR. MITCHELL: I know the maximum depth that
8 we went to, but, I believe that was after lunch when
9 we were doing maneuvers.

10 MR. TYRRELL: The submergence was before
11 lunch.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, we submerged before
13 lunch, even, we submerged before lunch and then it
14 was kind of like one group that wasn't having lunch
15 got a tour of the sonar room, and you know, stay in
16 the control room while the first group had lunch
17 with the Captain in the ward room.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

19 MR. MITCHELL: I am sorry, I am jumping
20 around a little bit.

21 MR. TYRRELL: No, no, this is fine. This
22 is, it is not often that people are asked to recall
23 everything that they did at a particular time. You
24 know, it is not easy thing to do.

1 Okay. So, after the vessel reached its
2 submerged depth, did you remain in the seat at the
3 time, or did somebody take your place or --

4 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, I remained in the seat
5 for quite awhile and then was just relieved by the
6 person that was behind my shoulders. It was kind of
7 like, okay, you have had enough now, he took over
8 and we went to do other things. Again, you know, I
9 think, you mentioned sonar room, I know we got to
10 see the sonar room. I think we got to see a little
11 bit of the communications room.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

13 MR. MITCHELL: And different parts of the
14 sub.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Okay. So, then after
16 the second seating of lunch and they decided to
17 start these maneuvers, did they tell you what kind
18 of maneuvers they were going to do?

19 MR. MITCHELL: They told us exactly, I
20 believe.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22 MR. MITCHELL: My recollection was they kind
23 of went through we are going to do these particular
24 maneuvers. We took the submarine down and they, you

1 know, they said, you read the press that the maximum
2 depth of the submarine is 600 feet or 800 feet, or
3 whatever the number was, we exceeded that depth.
4 Don't think that was partially just national
5 security that it, the submarine has a capacity to a
6 lot deeper than that.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Right. What type of
8 maneuvers did they say ahead of time that they were
9 going to perform?

10 MR. MITCHELL: I don't recall exactly what
11 they called them, but essentially were doing like 30
12 degree turns left, 30 degree turns right. And you
13 actually could feel and you would move literally on
14 the submarine as you moved. And I think they were
15 standard training exercises on evasive maneuvers,
16 would be what I would call it.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you recall any
18 particular, anything they said that was particular
19 in reference to the emergency blow, I think they
20 call, operation?

21 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, the Captain said that we
22 were going to do that as the last exercise before
23 going back to Pearl.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Did he say anything about the

1 significance of the exercise or you know, any --

2 MR. MITCHELL: I think he said they
3 practiced that in case of an emergency where the
4 submarine would have to come to surface, they have
5 to practice that maneuver.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And when they did
7 that, do you think the guests were still in the
8 control room?

9 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, they were.

10 MR. TYRRELL: What is your impression of the
11 control room at that time as far as was it noisy?

12 MR. MITCHELL: The whole, it was quieter
13 than church.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, the guests weren't
15 talking.

16 MR. MITCHELL: No, it was very clear that
17 you could speak --

18 MR. TYRRELL: Oops, I am sorry.

19 MR. MITCHELL: You could speak if spoken to,
20 and no, seriously, I mean, I think they even used
21 the reference to, I don't know if it was the XO or
22 another crew member, but when you are in the control
23 room, you know, you keep quiet.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What about, was there

1 any movement of anybody, crew member or guest around
2 in the area?

3 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, the crew members would
4 go through whatever their normal routines were. I
5 mean, I know that there were some crew members
6 moving. And back behind the control is kind of the
7 mapping area, and so you had some of us kind back in
8 that area and just kind of taking positions where
9 basically they told us to stand. You can stand
10 here, and that is exactly where we stayed.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, the guests were
12 not moving about anywhere?

13 MR. MITCHELL: No.

14 MR. MITCHELL: You know, we were moving
15 relatively to like leaning and stuff, as the sub
16 moved.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

18 MR. MITCHELL: It is just everybody was
19 affected by the gravity, I guess.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Right. Okay, but nobody was
21 moving from point A to point B?

22 MR. MITCHELL: No. For instance, my
23 position, I was standing really, there are two
24 periscopes.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

2 MR. MITCHELL: I would have been on the
3 right hand side of the second periscope, standing
4 directly behind Clary initially, before we started
5 the, the emergency blow procedure and behind the
6 Captain.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, you were lined up
8 with the right hand seat more or less.

9 MR. MITCHELL: The right hand seat is a
10 little bit further to the left. I was aligned with
11 the second periscope tube where I had kind of a
12 clear view to where you exited the control room,
13 but, you know, I had clear view of, you know, the
14 instruments.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Clary was in the seat,
16 right hand seat.

17 MR. MITCHELL: He wasn't in the seat
18 initially, he was standing next to me. At the time
19 of the emergency blow, the Captain gave specific
20 instructions and essentially designated two, two
21 volunteers to assist in the transaction.

22 MR. TYRRELL: Two volunteer guests.

23 MR. MITCHELL: Yes. Bear with me one
24 second.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Sure.

2 (Pause.)

3 MR. MITCHELL: Could you hold for one
4 second?

5 MR. TYRRELL: Certainly.

6 (Pause.)

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

8 MR. MITCHELL: So where were we? The
9 Captain asked for two volunteers.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

11 MR. MITCHELL: And he didn't really ask for
12 volunteers to be honest with you. The emergency
13 blow procedure, he designated who was going to
14 assist in the deal.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

16 MR. MITCHELL: He didn't, it wasn't like,
17 okay, who wants to do it. It was literally, it was
18 John Hall, you go stand over there, and do the
19 levers. And he designated Clary and I think he asked
20 Clary three times, because Clary first said he
21 didn't want to do it. To sit in the, and I believe
22 he was in the right hand seat.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

24 MR. MITCHELL: And again, my view of Clary

1 when he took the seat was somewhat obstructed and
2 that I was behind the second periscope.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Do you recall them
4 going through any procedure to check for surface
5 contacts --

6 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Before --

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Can you describe what
10 you recall?

11 MR. MITCHELL: The Captain went through
12 detail, he asked the people who were in control of
13 the ship at that time, to come to periscope depth.
14 And we, in fact, did that. And there are at least
15 two and I would almost call them television screens.
16 I don't think they are really flat screens, that
17 allowed you to see what he was looking at through
18 the periscope. They came up to periscope depth and
19 one of the officers, I don't recall his name,
20 cleared the periscope. Which he means he brought it
21 up to periscope depth and he did, I believe, at
22 least two to three full 360 degree rotations with
23 the periscope. And I was watching the screen as he
24 was doing it. And, you know, my recollection, what

1 I was seeing, there were, the periscope was up,
2 there were waves, so, it wasn't like you had just a
3 clear line of sight until the end of time, but you
4 know, you went around several times and the waves
5 aren't ever in the same spot at the same time, but I
6 saw absolutely nothing when he did his look. After
7 he completed it, the Captain asked or said he was
8 going to take a look and lifted his glasses up, I
9 saw him put his eyes on the periscope in two
10 additional full rotations, which I also watched in
11 the flat screen monitor. And I am just telling you
12 what I saw.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

14 MR. MITCHELL: To the best of my knowledge,
15 I didn't see anything. I mean, all I remember
16 seeing in the periscope view on those five or six
17 rotations were that there were waves, and it
18 appeared to be clear. It is black and white, it is
19 not color. But, I did not see any, any surface
20 vessels.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And do you recall in
22 the announcements from the sonar crew concerning
23 contacts in the area?

24 MR. MITCHELL: I did not.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

2 MR. MITCHELL: That is not to say it didn't
3 happen. I didn't, I just don't recall it.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Right. I see. Okay. Okay.

5

6 MR. MITCHELL: Do you want me to continue?

7 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, please.

8 MR. MITCHELL: Once he cleared the
9 periscope, they put the periscope down and the
10 Captain ordered for us to go to 400 feet.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

12 MR. MITCHELL: I believe was the order, and
13 he explained as we were going down that submarine,
14 you know, in an emergency blow procedure, we would
15 come up to the surface literally in about 10 seconds
16 from 400 feet. So, we went down to 400 feet. My
17 recollection was that there wasn't a whole lot of
18 time that passed between the periscope viewing and
19 reaching 400 feet and then doing the emergency blow
20 procedure.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

22 MR. MITCHELL: Again, I didn't have a stop
23 watch on it. I would guess less than five minutes.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

1 MR. MITCHELL: At that time, he instructed
2 Hall, or he had somebody say emergency blow and blow
3 the horn, I believe. It may have been Todd's wife.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

5 MR. MITCHELL: And then John was to push the
6 levers, I believe either forward or backward and
7 actually count out loud for 10 seconds or whatever
8 as he did it, which created, I guess, they pushed
9 the water out of the ballast tanks or whatever and
10 then we began to ascend. You could feel the ascent.
11 You were, and I was watching the depth gauge, you
12 could see us rapidly ascending to the surface.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. During the ascent, did
14 any of the submarine crew say anything before,
15 before impact?

16 MR. MITCHELL: What I recall is, you know,
17 there were, one of the crew members had mentioned
18 when the front of the ship was out of the water,
19 which again occurs, I don't know if it was 75 feet,
20 50 feet, whatever, but the front of the ship was out
21 of the water, and nothing was said until, you know,
22 the ship was coming out, and my recollection was it
23 wasn't like it was this huge shutter on the ship or
24 anything. It was literally like almost like two

1 clicks. And the Captain, my recollection was that
2 he said, you know, "what the hell was that". I
3 don't think he used "Jesus", I think he said "what
4 the hell was that?" And one of the officers to the
5 left of him looked back and said, "Captain, sir, I
6 have no idea." And at that point, as the ship, you
7 know, surfaced, you know, his eyes got, I think he
8 knew at that time that we had made contact with
9 something, my impressions then I thought something
10 might have broken on the submarine. At that point
11 he asked very quickly, "will my guests please exit
12 the control room and go down to the officers mess."
13 And it was dead silence. We filed out of there and
14 right down into the officers mess, the crew mess, I
15 am sorry, not the officers mess, the crew mess. And
16 when we got down there, I heard, you know, you hear
17 over the intercom and I don't exactly recall what he
18 said, but it was, you know, we made contact with the
19 surface vessel. You know, at that point when we
20 were in the crews' mess, there is a flat screen
21 television in there and it was on and it shows what
22 is being viewed through the periscope.

23 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

24 MR. MITCHELL: And I could see the ship.

1 MR. TYRRELL: What did it look like?

2 MR. MITCHELL: You know, first I thought it
3 was a yacht and there was some confusion initially
4 as to the size of the deal, whether it was a whale
5 watching ship, I think was the first report that we
6 got. It appeared to me that I saw people scrambling
7 around inside the ship. You could actually see
8 people. It had, you know, kind of like cutout
9 window deals, that I remember seeing. And it
10 appeared to me it was, the waves were rather large,
11 so you could see it go up and down, but it appeared
12 to be sinking, you know, it wasn't like, like you
13 see in Titanic where the front of the ship comes up
14 and it goes down, you know, vertical, it looked to
15 me like it was sinking horizontally.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Just going bodily down.

17 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, and we probably weren't
18 in the crews mess for more than a few minutes
19 looking at that deal. At that point, the Captain
20 had announced over the intercom, "please prepare for
21 rescue procedures", and at that point we were
22 escorted to the torpedo room.

23 MR. TYRRELL: I see.

24 MR. MITCHELL: All of us. And basically

1 were put in the far part of the torpedo room where
2 we were absolutely, completely out of the way. And
3 they were converting the crews mess, I believe, into
4 a place to take survivors off the boat. And I know
5 that they, they were moving emergency equipment.
6 And down in the torpedo room, you know, we assisted
7 a little bit with, you know, they have got like a
8 pole, with a little hook on it, I guess you use to
9 help get people out or whatever, and you know, we
10 assisted getting that untangled down in the torpedo
11 room. And there was just dead silence. We were all
12 in shock.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Did you actually see the
14 vessel sink below the surface of the water?

15 MR. MITCHELL: No. Literally we were, we
16 were not in crews mess that long. But, the
17 periscope viewing deal in the room was on at that
18 point, so we saw the ship. And everyone was
19 devastated.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Other than the announcement
21 that you heard to rescue people, did you hear any
22 other announcements during this time over the loud
23 speaker system?

24 MR. MITCHELL: The Captain told the crew

1 that, you know, basically to, you know, -- to do
2 their procedures. He was very professional.

3 MR. TYRRELL: What happened next after that?

4 MR. MITCHELL: We were down in the torpedo
5 room for a period of time as they prepared to take
6 survivors aboard the ship. You know, you would get
7 relatively constant updates as the Captain would
8 speak over the loud speaker to the crew and we would
9 just listen in.

10 MR. TYRRELL: What was he saying?

11 MR. MITCHELL: You know, I believe he was
12 just talking about, you know, diver getting prepared
13 to leave the sub to go out. The Coast Guard had
14 been called, that he had called the Coast Guard and
15 the ETA of the helicopters was 15 minutes.

16 MR. TYRRELL: I see.

17 MR. MITCHELL: That ETA of the Coast Guard
18 cutter and whatever else they were sending out was
19 45 minutes. So, you know, he was giving those types
20 of updates.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. What about the, did
22 you say something about the reaction of, how did the
23 crew appear to be reacting to all of this?

24 MR. MITCHELL: Very professionally. I mean,

1 obviously they were, it wasn't like, I mean, the
2 passengers, the civilians were, it was like our
3 heads down and just, you know, we were just
4 horrified. The crew, you know, in my opinion,
5 operated the way you would want them to react if I
6 were in the water. I mean, they were, they were
7 going about their specific tasks.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. All right. So, you are
9 in the torpedo room, how long did you stay in the
10 torpedo room, I guess --

11 MR. MITCHELL: I think it had to have been
12 at least 10 or 15 minutes. The helicopters may have
13 even been on site before we left the torpedo room.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And when you left the
15 torpedo room, where did you go?

16 MR. MITCHELL: We reassembled in the crews
17 mess, you know, there was, the Captain had indicated
18 that the seas were too high to allow for them to
19 safely take any of the survivors aboard the ship.
20 And I believe --

21 (Tape change.)

22 MR. MITCHELL: You don't get a view from the
23 types of waves from the pictures that you see on the
24 news, about the submarine, the waves were rather

1 high, in my opinion. I am not an expert. I am just
2 telling you it appeared to be as if, you know, what
3 we saw with the periscope was looking at, you have
4 got to remember we are feeling the motion of the
5 submarine.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

7 MR. MITCHELL: That, that the waves were
8 high.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Could you see through the
10 periscope at any time, or through the video display
11 through the periscope, could you see, actually see
12 the deck of the submarine?

13 MR. MITCHELL: You could see the deck of the
14 submarine, but you also, it would go, it would
15 almost go out of vision slightly with the waves.

16 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

17 MR. MITCHELL: So, you would literally come
18 back up and then go down. Back up and go down. You
19 could see that it was sinking, but the part of the
20 visual that we were seeing was the waves.

21 MR. TYRRELL: So, you saw the waves coming
22 over the deck of the submarine from the video --

23 MR. MITCHELL: Not over the deck of the
24 submarine. Over the deck of the crippled ship.

1 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, oh, okay, okay.

2 MR. MITCHELL: The periscope view, you don't
3 really see the deck of the ship.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So you didn't see your
5 own deck.

6 MR. MITCHELL: No.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

8 MR. MITCHELL: I am just saying it appeared
9 that, I know what the deck looked like when I was on
10 it, when we were leaving Pearl.

11 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

12 MR. MITCHELL: And it was absolute, you
13 know, pristine, no waves.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

15 MR. MITCHELL: And, you know, Helen, who was
16 with me, actually got a splash of water on face up
17 in the conning tower, so, you know, you could see
18 where the water was coming over top of the haul just
19 as we were moving.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

21 MR. MITCHELL: So, you, if you put waves out
22 there and, you know, and I understand where you
23 couldn't stand on that deck.

24 MR. TYRRELL: Right. Okay.

1 MR. MITCHELL: And it also said that it
2 appeared that the survivors were all in the life
3 boats, and you know, my impression was that there
4 was concern on the safety of the, of trying to bring
5 the survivors aboard the submarine.

6 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Okay.

7 MR. MITCHELL: And that everything was being
8 done to get the helicopter rescue boats out there.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. All right. So, you
10 were brought back to the, I think you said crews
11 mess.

12 MR. MITCHELL: Crews mess.

13 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. And what happened
14 then?

15 MR. MITCHELL: The crew and the Captain, I
16 think the Captain even came down and addressed us,
17 you know, walked through, he kept us updated as to
18 kind of what was going on, I mean. What I recall in
19 the crews mess was that at one point they had called
20 the Navy and the decision had been made that the
21 submarine was going to remain out, participating in
22 the search and rescue operations overnight. And it
23 was something that upset a lot of us, that we were,
24 you know, the first reaction is, are you telling me

1 everything. Is there something wrong with the ship?
2 Is it going to sink?

3 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

4 MR. MITCHELL: You know, am I, you know, in
5 danger. And so when they first told us that we
6 would be spending the night on the ship, several of
7 us were quite upset.

8 MR. TYRRELL: Yes.

9 MR. MITCHELL: And that is when, either the
10 XO or the Captain, I think, came down and reassured
11 us that the vessel was fine. There was nothing
12 wrong with it. That we had been instructed to stay
13 at sea and that we were going to participate in the
14 search and rescue. That they would make
15 accommodations for our sleeping aboard the sub. In
16 other words, they cleared out one section of the
17 submarine to give us space to sleep.

18 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. So, you remained
19 aboard the submarine for the rest of the, overnight
20 then?

21 MR. MITCHELL: Yes. You know, I know we
22 had, we ate another meal there in the crews mess and
23 then we basically, at some point we were, the guests
24 basically took over the officers, the ward room, I

1 think is what they call it.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

3 MR. MITCHELL: Which, you know, is where we
4 had lunch.

5 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

6 MR. MITCHELL: And at that point they
7 assigned one particular officer, who essentially,
8 you know, almost baby sat us. Stayed there with us
9 the whole time. The Captain came in on several
10 occasions throughout the evening, giving us updates
11 as to what was going on.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Does anything in
13 particular stand out in your mind during this period
14 that you were told, that might be, that might be
15 important to my investigation?

16 MR. MITCHELL: No, all I can tell you is
17 that the Captain made it very clear to the crew
18 that, you know, the integrity, not embellish any
19 stories, and to tell the facts if asked. And, you
20 know, we heard that obviously as well. You know,
21 the rest of the evening on the ship, you know,
22 somber, you know, we basically were just kind of all
23 there in the room together, you know, I think they
24 had a movie or something on to try to give us

1 something to look at. And, you know, most people
2 didn't sleep very well, but, you know, we did get an
3 opportunity to sleep down below decks. You know, at
4 one point, Helen and I asked and were given
5 permission to go back up to the control room just to
6 observe the search and rescue operation.

7 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

8 MR. MITCHELL: But, this was late at night,
9 later at night.

10 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Did anybody ask the
11 Captain why, why the accident had happened?

12 MR. MITCHELL: You know, we, he was clear
13 that, I don't think he knows. I don't think he knew
14 at that time what went wrong. You know, I tell you
15 my impressions of the Captain were all extremely
16 favorable.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

18 MR. MITCHELL: And we were all just
19 distraught that, you know, we can't believe this has
20 happened to this guy. I mean, he has got to be one
21 of the best COs the Navy has got. And I don't know,
22 I don't, I can't even really speculate what went
23 wrong.

24 MR. TYRRELL: I was just wondering if

1 anybody had asked him that, that particular
2 question.

3 MR. MITCHELL: They may have, and he
4 couldn't, you know, couldn't respond.

5 MR. TYRRELL: But, you didn't hear a
6 response?

7 MR. MITCHELL: No, I did not hear a
8 response.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. How long were you or
10 how did you get off the vessel, when?

11 MR. MITCHELL: We basically stayed out
12 overnight and at that one point the next morning, we
13 were told that we were, had been released from the
14 area, and that we were going back to Pearl.

15 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

16 MR. MITCHELL: And what happened at that
17 point, we were in the surface, obviously, after the
18 accident, we stayed on the surface the entire time.

19 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

20 MR. MITCHELL: And at some point, you know,
21 they gave us an ETA that we were going to get 9:30
22 or something in the morning, and you know, we were
23 moving, you know, at four or five knots into, into
24 port.

1 MR. TYRRELL: You went back to the same
2 place were you boarded the vessel?

3 MR. MITCHELL: No, before we, we, I think
4 Hickman Air Force Base is on your right hand side as
5 you are going into the submarine area, before we
6 kind of rounded the turn where I guess the reporters
7 were assembled, they had brought out a boat and we
8 disembarked the submarine into the boat.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Okay.

10 MR. MITCHELL: At that point several
11 officers from the Navy got on the ship. So, they
12 brought, you know, several other officers out to the
13 ship as we disembarked.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Did the Navy, I know you have
15 told me what the Captain told you about telling the
16 truth and all of that stuff, did anyone else from
17 the Navy give you any kind of instructions about
18 what to say or not to say?

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, on the boat we were met
20 with a chaplain from the Navy as well as several
21 other officers and they were consoling us as we went
22 back into port. We went into drydock. We were all
23 escorted from the drydock to a waiting van and then
24 taken to an auditorium. At which time, I think it

1 is Admiral Konetzni(ph), I hope I pronounced his
2 name right. He addressed us along with the JAG
3 Commander, John McDonald.

4 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

5 MR. MITCHELL: Bob Brubaker, who again was
6 the, supposedly Chief of Staff for Admiral Konetzni,
7 was there as well, as well as several other
8 officers. And they gave us essentially a debrief.
9 I think Konetzni came forward and was very
10 emotional. You could tell that they were severely
11 affected by the loss of life. Because I think they
12 knew, you know, we had all these press reports about
13 them out searching for survivors and they were
14 searching for bodies. I mean, they were aware of
15 the fact that, you know, everybody had gotten out
16 that had been on the sub, or on the boat, had been
17 rescued.

18 MR. TYRRELL: When did you find out how many
19 people were missing?

20 MR. MITCHELL: Actually, again, there were
21 bits and pieces of information right after the
22 collision, you know, they were having trouble, the
23 Captain came over the intercom and asked if anyone
24 spoke Chinese, initially, because they thought it

1 was, they could not communicate with the people in
2 the water. And eventually, you know, we found out,
3 you know, he mentioned it was a Japanese fishing
4 boat and I guess that came up later during the
5 evening. And that the Captain of the vessel, you
6 know, had conflicting stories as to how many were on
7 the boat.

8 MR. TYRRELL: I see.

9 MR. MITCHELL: But, he did announce that at
10 one point that they thought there were 35 or 36
11 people on the boat. That 25 or so had been rescued
12 and that there were nine uncounted for.

13 MR. TYRRELL: I see. Well, is there anything
14 else you think about this incident that you can
15 recall that you think would be helpful for me?

16 MR. MITCHELL: I think I probably covered
17 everything. I mean, I will tell you that the Navy,
18 their instructions to us were really, they
19 apologized, you know, for the fact that we had to be
20 involved in that. And that they were taking every
21 steps that they could to assist the families and
22 survivors of the ship. You know, they, I was kind
23 of surprised about, they didn't like debrief all of
24 us individually and say, well, what was your

1 experience on the boat? I figure they, I guess they
2 have got enough expert witnesses on the ship who
3 knew what happened, that they didn't think that our,
4 our observations were, you know. We don't know what
5 we were seeing in some instances.

6 MR. TYRRELL: Right. Okay.

7 MR. MITCHELL: And they, you know, they did
8 not give us any specific instructions that thy shall
9 not talk to the press. You know, there was, there
10 was discussion among the people in the room, you
11 know, that we really didn't want to get drugged into
12 this, and that, I know we asked the question, if the
13 Navy could keep from having our names released.

14 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

15 MR. MITCHELL: And they said they would do
16 everything to protect our privacy.

17 MR. TYRRELL: Yes. They certainly did that.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Probably to their detriment.

19 The press has had gone off and -- You know, there
20 is no smoking gun on the passengers on the boat.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

22 MR. MITCHELL: You know, in my view we did
23 not obstruct the crew in any way. The only place
24 where, you know, it took some time, is they had to

1 have an officer baby sit us.

2 MR. TYRRELL: Right.

3 MR. MITCHELL: You know, on the bridge, you
4 know, I got an opportunity to, to drive in the
5 submerging, I can tell you, it is not like they are
6 turning over the ship to civilians to drive. I
7 mean, it, I tell you my other impressions again, the
8 Captain was, you know, he appeared to be a great
9 leader, I think. It is a tragedy. I know if it was
10 equipment failure. I mean, I can't, I don't know
11 what happened.

12 MR. TYRRELL: Okay. Well, thank you very
13 much for taking the time out of your day to talk to
14 me. If there is something else that you recall
15 later, in a day or two even, a week or two, if you,
16 if you think it is important, you can give me a call
17 back and let me know. I would appreciate it.

18 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

19 MR. TYRRELL: I understand that --

20 MR. MITCHELL: Would you like to talk to
21 Helen?

22 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, I would. And I --

23 MR. MITCHELL: She is here. Would you want
24 to talk to her now?

1 MR. TYRRELL: Could I, my command center --

2 MR. MITCHELL: Call you back.

3 MR. TYRRELL: My command center is paging me
4 and --

5 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

6 MR. TYRRELL: And I need to find out why
7 they are trying to get me. Could you possibly call
8 back on that 800 number in say half hour or so.

9 MR. MITCHELL: Half hour. Okay.

10 MR. TYRRELL: I would really appreciate it.

11 (Pause.)

12 MR. MITCHELL: Can we do it after lunch, if
13 that is okay?

14 MR. TYRRELL: Yes, you could.

15 MR. MITCHELL: We aren't trying to avoid
16 anything, but --

17 MR. TYRRELL: No, that would be fine.

18 MR. MITCHELL: -- we have got some
19 appointments. Basically, what we did, we just got
20 out of town. We were in Las Vegas.

21 MR. TYRRELL: Oh, I don't blame you.

22 MR. MITCHELL: I didn't want to be anywhere
23 near the, the press has been calling and again, I
24 don't think I add anything to the press stuff. And I

1 don't mind talking to you, telling you anything you
2 want to know.

3 MR. TYRRELL: Right. That would be great.

4 MR. MITCHELL: I just --

5 MR. TYRRELL: Right after, let's see, what
6 time do you have right now, about, is it about noon
7 or 11 o'clock out, one --

8 MR. MITCHELL: It is 10:10.

9 MR. TYRRELL: Ten, ten, okay. Call me back
10 at --

11 MR. MITCHELL: And I will tell you this,
12 also you haven't asked, but we do have pictures.

13 MR. TYRRELL: That would be fantastic, if I
14 could get copies of them.

15 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

16 MR. TYRRELL: I will give you, do you have
17 pencil and paper?

18 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah.

19 MR. TYRRELL: All right. The mailing address
20 is --

21 MR. MITCHELL: They don't show anything, I
22 mean, I don't think it is anything that is
23 revealing, but --

24 MR. TYRRELL: Well, I would still like to

1 look at them.

2 MR. MITCHELL: Okay.

3 MR. TYRRELL: The mailing address is
4 National Transportation Safety Board, Office of
5 Marine Safety, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, East.

6 MR. MITCHELL: Four, nine, oh.

7 MR. TYRRELL: L'Enfant Plaza, L-'-E-N-F-A-N-
8 T.

9 MR. MITCHELL: OKAY.

10 MR. TYRRELL: Washington, D.C., the zip code
11 is 20594. And if you could call me back say at one
12 o'clock your time, if that is convenient or after
13 you finish lunch.

14 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah, between one or one
15 thirty our time, we will call back and you can talk
16 to Helen.

17 MR. TYRRELL: That would be great. Thank
18 you very much.

19 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Thanks.

20 MR. TYRRELL: Bye, bye.

21 (Tape ends.)